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# *The Logic of Growth: Twelfth-Century Nominalists and the Development of Theories of the Incarnation*

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Sed ut ad loquendum de dialectica revertamur, vide  
multis placuisse illam positionem qua positum est, ni-  
hil crescere.<sup>1</sup>

## I. INTRODUCTION

Among the various testimonia assembled by Iwakuma and Ebbesen to the twelfth-century school of philosophers known as the *Nominales*,<sup>2</sup> four record their commitment to the apparently outrageous thesis that nothing grows. My aim in this essay is to explore the reasons the *Nominales* had for maintaining this thesis and to investigate the role that the theory which supported it played in the development of late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century debates over the character of the hypostatic union. My investigation concerns only one aspect of twelfth-century *Nominalism*<sup>3</sup> but once this part of their system is understood, we will be better able to characterise the whole and the way in which the views of the *Nominales* conflicted with those of their opponents. So long as the testimonia remain few and rather slight such a reconstruction offers our only hope for finding the *Nominales* and their influence where their name has not been recorded.

The *Nominales* were in some sense the followers of Peter Abaelard and in Abaelard's work we find discussions of the thesis that nothing grows. I will thus begin with an account of Abaelard's theory of integral wholes, the

1. Alexander Neckham, *De Naturis Rerum Et De Laudibus Divinae Sapientiae*, ed. T. H. Wright (London, 1863), chap. 174, p. 288.

2. Iwakuma Yukio and Sten Ebbesen, "Logico-Theological Schools from the Second Half of the 12th Century: A List of Sources," *Vivarium* XXX (1992):173–210.

3. Since this group were apparently the first ever to be called '*nominalists*' I think that we may justifiably capitalize the name of the theory to indicate that we are referring to their version of it.

kinds of entities of which he thinks the thesis is true. In the testimonia the claim that nothing grows is connected with another which has it that the reference of masculine and feminine pronouns differs from that of neuter pronouns. Abaelard is important in linking the two theses but the theoretical connection can best be made, I argue, by appealing to a treatment of *obligationes* that must surely be associated with the *Nominales*. Finally, having established the character of the thesis that nothing grows and its theoretical connection with the thesis of the variety of pronomial reference I will begin to explore the role played by the theory that supports both theses in accounts of the hypostatic union dating from the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century.

## II. ABAELARD ON THE IDENTITY OF INTEGRAL WHOLE

Abaelard investigates the character of growth, or augmentation, and decrease as kinds of change, and specifically as kinds of quantitative change, both in his treatment of intrinsic *loci* in the *Dialectica*<sup>4</sup> and of Aristotle's classification of changes in the *Logica 'Ingredientibus'*.<sup>5</sup> In both works he raises the question of what it is that is properly to be said to undergo such changes and points out that if the putative object of change is described simply as an integral whole, then it seems that nothing grows.

To characterise increase and decrease Abaelard proposes that such changes occur to something when there is an addition to or subtraction from its quantity.<sup>6</sup> Since the cases of increase and decrease are entirely parallel I will from now on talk only about growth, or augmentation.

In general, then, according to Abaelard, growth occurs with the addition of parts to an integral whole. Thus, in order for a substance or any other item to grow it must constitute such a whole. This is uncontroversially so in the case of corporeal substances which are, as bodies, continuous integral wholes. Collections of disconnected items may also be integral

4. Petrus Abaelardus, *Dialectica*, ed. L. M. De Rijk, 2nd ed. (Assen: Van Gorcum 1970), III:1, p. 418 ff.

5. *Logica 'Ingredientibus'*, in Peter Abaelards philosophische Schriften, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, ed. B. Geyer, XXI, (Münster: Aschendorff 1919–1933), p. 299 ff. Abaelard discusses Aristotle's classification of changes in the *Categories*. He also knows from Boethius of the different classification given in the *Physics*.

6. *Dialectica*, p. 421: "Et est quidem augmentum motus essentiae rei secundum quantitatis ipsius intensionem, diminutio uero secundum eiusdem remissionem. Mutatur enim res secundum augmentum, cum ipsa substantiae quantitas per additamentum alicuius creuit, ueluti cum pueris adolentibus sua Deus occulte ministrat incrementa atque nostram extendit qualibet dimensione substantiam siue in altum siue in longum seu in latum."

wholes and the question of just which collections do constitute such wholes is a crucial one for the theory.

The problem that interests us arises with the attempt to locate exactly what it is that grows with the addition of parts. Identifying an integral whole simply by its having the parts that it does, Abaelard uses an argument familiar from criticisms of the theory of universals as classes to show that such a whole cannot grow. In order for an item to grow it must be possible for it, the very same item, to be larger, in the sense of having more parts, at some later time than it had at an earlier time. The addition of new parts to an integral whole results, on the other hand, in an entirely new whole.<sup>7</sup>

It seems that an augmentation cannot come about in something by the addition of something, indeed *it seems that nothing is augmented*. For when something is added to something what is added does not grow, nor does that to which it is added grow, since it has no more parts than it had before. Nor does the whole formed by conjoining them seem to grow. For it has just the same parts as it had before, the part that was added and the part to which it was added.

The parallel passage in the *Logica 'Ingredientibus'* formulates the apparently paradoxical claim almost exactly as we find it attributed to the *Nominales*. "*It seems*," says Abaelard there, that "*no things grow*," "there is, it seems, nothing that becomes greater than it was before by the addition of something."<sup>8</sup> The conclusion follows immediately and obviously from the individuation and differentiation of an integral whole solely by its parts. In the *Dialectica* on the other hand Abaelard is prepared to allow that some talk of growth is nevertheless appropriate for such wholes. He argues, in effect, that we may say that one such integral whole is greater than another in virtue of

7. *Dialectica*, p. 421: "Non enim aliquod augmentum fieri in aliquo uidetur per adiunctionem alicuius, quippe *nihil augeri uidetur*. Neque enim cum aliquid alicui apponitur, illud quod appositum est, creuit neque illud cui appositum est, cum plures partes quam prius non habeat. Sed nec totum quod ex eis coniunctum est, creuisse uidetur. Eas enim tantum partes adhuc retinet quas prius habebat, illud scilicet quod est adiunctum et cui est adiunctum."

8. *Logica 'Ingredientibus'*, p. 299: "Si quis autem crescere dicat adiunctione alicuius maius effici, quam prius esset, *nulla crescere uidentur*. Nihil est quod uideatur maius fieri, quam prius erat ex additamento, ut si tribus lapidibus quartus addatur atque ideo acruus qui prius erat trium lapidum, creuisse dicatur adiunctione quarti lapidis, non uidetur uerum, cum uidelicet acruus trium lapidum adiuncto etiam quarto lapide in quantitate sui non plus quam habeat, sed tribus lapidibus tunc quoque constat, sicut ante, nec plures partes quam prius habet, sed nec quartus lapis superadditus simili ratione creuit nec ipsum quoque compositum ex tribus lapidibus et quarto adiuncto."

The example of the pile of stones is a very obvious one but it interesting find it attributed to the *Nominales*, probably at least a hundred years after Abaelard wrote, in an anonymous note recorded as item 70 by Iwakuma and Ebbesen:

"Praeterea dicunt Nominales quod nihil crescit, unde si lapis acervo lapidum adiciatur, non erit idem acervus <at> que prius, sed alius—quare autem hoc sit, bene cogitata—reales autem econtra."

augmentation if at the time in question it includes the other as a proper part but at an earlier time the part existed without being included in the collection that now constitutes the greater whole.<sup>9</sup> Thus in the case of a gnomon adjoined to a square, we may say that the resulting larger square is augmented with respect to both the smaller square and the gnomon.

Abaelard rejects as contrary to both ordinary usage and authority the only alternative theory of growth that he considers here. According to this theory, if a part *P* is added to a whole *W*, then the whole *W* + *P* grows if the part *P* is moved closer to the whole *W*. Growth is simply the rearrangement of parts. This rejected theory seems to attempt to address an objection to Abaelard's criterion of growth that he does not raise directly: How are we to locate earlier and later wholes when all the putative parts exist during the time period under consideration?

Although he does not raise the question, Abaelard does provide an answer to it. For he notes that, since "no thing has at any time more or fewer parts than at any other" it seems that only continuous wholes can be said to have come to be by augmentation.<sup>10</sup> The distinction between the earlier and the later whole must be made in terms of the connection to one another, or lack of it, of the parts. It is simply not legitimate, according to the theory of the *Dialectica*, to talk of growth where the wholes in question consist of discrete parts.

Despite saving the concept of growth in some sense, Abaelard does not come close in this part of the *Dialectica* to giving us what we want: an account, that is, of growth which will allow the truth of perfectly ordinary claims such as 'Socrates grew from a child into a man.' Curiously, while in two other places in the *Dialectica*<sup>11</sup> he appeals to a solution to the problem which guarantees

9. *Dialectica*, p. 422: "Cum autem omnia cuiuslibet partis membra ipsum quoque constituent totum, necesse est totum a singulis partibus suis in quantitate partium abundare, id est easdem omnes et insuper quasdam habere, quod quidem est plures in augmento partes habere."

*Dialectica*, p. 423: "Non enim, sicut diximus, aliqua pars in constitutione cuiuslibet augetur, sed ipsum compositum respectu componentium creuit, cum uidelicet totum contineat quod unaquaeque pars comprehendit atque insuper quicquid quaelibet aliarum partium continent."

*Dialectica*, p. 423: "Unde cum dicimus: si quid cuiuslibet rei sit additum totum maius efficitur, non ita est accipiendum ut maius fiat compositum quam prius esset, sed maius quam singulae partes effectum est per adiunctionem cuiuslibet ipsarum; prius namque compositum non erat. Et si aliae partes quae prius erant, accipiantur, non erit numerus earum diminutus; eadem enim extra coniunctionem erant partes quae intra. Fit itaque augmenti comparatio non de composito ad se ipsum, sed de toto ad singulas partes."

10. *Dialectica*, pp. 423–24: "Ac fortasse in his rebus quae coniunctionem non exigunt, sed naturaliter discretae sunt, sicut numeri, nihil operatur ad augmentum compositio, sed in his quae per continuationem fiunt, ut in quadrangulo qui ex gnomone et quadrangulo coniungitur."

11. In the discussion of the quantitative comparison of accidents, *Dialectica*, p. 426 ff. and in the discussion of integral wholes, *Dialectica*, p. 547 ff.

the legitimacy of such claims, the solution itself, is not set out in that work but rather in the *Logica 'Ingredientibus'*.<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to note in passing, however, that in the *Dialectica*, Abaelard points out that one consequence of an account of principal parts that he rejects is that a substance is individuated precisely by its having the integral parts that it does. It follows, he argues, that, according to this theory, whenever Socrates cuts his toenails or fingernails he destroys his substance. In fact, the cutting of each successive nail destroys a different substance and so the name 'Socrates' is radically equivocal, its reference varies from one moment to the next.<sup>13</sup>

12. The discussion in the *Logica 'Ingredientibus'* covers many of the same questions as that in the *Dialectica* and in particular the important distinction between first and second creation. It is not obvious, however, at least to me that one of the discussions marks a particular advance upon the other.

13. In the discussion of increase and decrease with respect to the comparison of accidental features, Abaelard sets out the conditions for something to be said to be more or less white than it was before. Here the substance which supports the accidents is what unifies the quantitative whole constituted by the collection of individual whitenesses. To say that Socrates is whiter today than he was yesterday is equivalent to saying that Socrates's whiteness has increased between yesterday and today. The quantitative whole which yesterday consisted of all the individual whitenesses inhering in Socrates has not grown. It is impossible for it to do so. Rather, Socrates's whiteness has grown by the addition of individual whitenesses. It now consists of a collection of individual whitenesses of which yesterday's collection of individual whitenesses is a proper part.

*Dialectica*, p. 427: "Augmentum itaque per aggregationem, sicut detrimentum per subtractionem, contingit, ut nihil proprie augmentatum dicatur nisi respectu eius quod prius de ipso fuerat, eius uidelicet partis quae prius sola exstiterat, ueluti, cum illi quae prius fuerat albedini alia aggregatur, albedo crescere dicitur secundum aggregatam partem et hoc subiectum quod ipsam suscipit, magis album quam prius secundum albedinis augmentum dicitur."

One of the criteria proposed for being a principal part of an integral whole which Abaelard investigates has it that a part is a principal part if and only if upon its destruction there follows the destruction of the substance of the whole. Abaelard notes that the criterion requires the destruction of substance rather than quantity since any subtraction from a quantitative whole destroys its quantity. Although Socrates's quantity is destroyed when he cuts his nails, nevertheless the 'Socratic substance' survives the operation.

*Dialectica*, p. 549: "Substantiae uero destructionem ideo considerant: ad quantitatis totius diminutionem cuiuslibet partis destructio sufficit, ut si hic etiam unguis pereat, quantitas Socratis corporis eadem remanere non potest, cum tanta iam non sit quanta prius erat. Sicut enim per adiunctionem cuiuslibet totum crescit, sic per eius subtractionem diminuitur. Cum autem ungue adempto quantitas corporis eadem non remaneat, Socraticae tamen essentia substantiae non uidetur mutata; adhuc enim et homo et Socrates dicitur. Sed non omnia illa quae prius erant, secundum quantitatem esse contingit, id est unguem cum caeteris omnibus partibus."

Abaelard goes on to conclude as a *reductio* of this destructive criterion of principal parts that it follows that every part is in fact a principal part and so upon the subtraction of even the smallest part substantial destruction follows. He notes that the theory in effect identifies the substance simply as the collection of its integral parts, and makes 'Socrates' and 'this man' equivocal from one moment to the next.

Godfrey of Poitiers, writing in the second decade of the thirteenth century reports of the *Nominales* that “when they say that nothing grows, they say that each body ceases to be in each instant.”<sup>14</sup>

In the *Logica ‘Ingredientibus’* Abaelard offers a simple and obvious solution to the puzzle that if growth is by addition then nothing grows.<sup>15</sup> The solution turns upon the possibility of characterizing integral wholes at different levels of generality. It is true, of course, that the addition of a fourth stone to a heap of three stones does not make the heap of three stones into a heap of four stones, nothing can do that, since it is impossible for three to be four. On the other hand, the addition of the fourth stone certainly results in a larger heap. Thus, without any mention of the solution set out in the *Dialectica*, Abaelard notes that the problem:

may easily be solved, if, that is, we say that that grows which by the addition of something other becomes a composite that does not cease to have its nature or property, just as for example if some water is added to water, it becomes a composite which is also called water.<sup>16</sup>

For the *Nominales*, the case of water will turn out to be rather less straightforward than Abaelard supposes but it is clear that the solution will work for cases such as Socrates’s growth from child to man. Despite the many additions to his flesh, he remains throughout a human being and Socrates. Abaelard discusses various difficulties with the application of this solution to collections of substances of different kinds but quickly points out that it can always be implemented by taking a general term, say *X*, which applies to all the items in the resulting collection and noting an increase, or growth, in the

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*Dialectica*, p. 552: “Sed quid dicemus, si ex cuiuslibet partis destructione totius substantiae, sequitur interitus, cum ungue perduto aut tota etiam manu uel pede Socratem remanere uiderimus et in ipso adhuc hominis integram substantiam permanere? Non itaque hic homo in omnibus suis partibus simul consistere uidetur, sed in his tantum praeter quas reperiri non potest; alioquin aequiuoca eius praedicatio per diuersa tempora uidebitur secundum augmenta corporis sui uel detrimenta. Si enim omnium simul quae in homine modo sunt, ‘Socrates’ aut ‘hic homo’ nomina fiunt, cum dicitur hoc corpus hic homo esse, omnia quae in eo sunt praedicabuntur. Si uero ungue adempto uel pede absciso ‘hic homo’ de residuo corpore enuntietur, non eadem praedicatio fuerit substantia iam diminuta nec huius hominis substantia quae prius erat ea quae modo est poterit dici, id est haec manus cum reliquo corpore reliquum corpus esse.”

Abaelard goes on to argue that amputating a hand—and indeed merely cutting off a nail—would be murder since it would cause the destruction of the substance.

14. Iwakuma and Ebbesen, text 48c: “Licet tamen concederem ‘Socrates est aliud quam fuerit’ secundum opinionem Nominalium (qui, cum dicunt nihil crescere, dicunt quod quodlibet corpus in quolibet instanti desinit esse), secundum eos non ideo concederem ‘Christus est aliud quam ipse sit’.”

15. *Logica ‘Ingredientibus’*, p. 299.

16. *Logica ‘Ingredientibus’*, p. 299: “Sic autem fortasse facilius soluetur, si uidelicet crescere id dicamus quod per adiunctionem alterius transit in tale compositum quod a natura uel proprietate sua non recedit, ueluti si aquae alia aqua superaddatur, aqua cui superadditum est, in quoddam transit compositum quod etiam aqua dicitur.”

*number* of Xs. He does not, unfortunately, discuss whether there are any limits on the choice of terms.

Abaelard's solution to the puzzle of identity through growth and diminution recalls that which was apparently proposed by Chrysippus. Like Chrysippus, indeed, he uses the example of the consequences of the amputation of a foot in arguing for the absurdity of a theory which individuates a substance solely through its integral parts. There seems to be no way, however, that Abaelard and his contemporaries could have known of the work of their Stoic predecessors on the *Growing Argument*. They reinvented the problems of ancient logic and in Abaelard's case rediscovered one of the solutions.

Alexander Neckham was, by his own admission, a *Parvipontanian Realist*,<sup>17</sup> an opponent of the *Nominales* and one of our main sources of evidence for their views. In his theological treatise, the *Speculum Speculationum*, he refers to the *Nominales* in discussing the question of whether the term 'person' is univocally predicated of God and creatures and implies at least that there was some connection for them between claims about growth and the use of different forms of pronouns:

It is customary to ask in logical investigations whether to be Peter is to be someone (*esse quem*) and whether to be Peter is to be something (*esse quid*). This accepted, infer 'therefore to be someone is to be something.' There are many, and especially the *Nominales*, who judge in entirely the same way about the supposition of a created person and a divine person. They say therefore that to be Peter is to be someone but not to be something. Whence they say that to the question 'who is running' ('*quis currit*') one should reply 'Peter' but to the question 'What is running' ('*quid currit*') one should reply 'a substance'. Just as they assert 'Peter grows' but not, however, 'a substance grows'. But isn't the growth (*crementum*) which is in Peter in a substance? Isn't man a species of the genus substance? Isn't being Peter inferior to being a substance?<sup>18</sup>

17. In *De Laudibus Divinae Sapientiae* talking about Paris he says, (ll. 330–36): "Qua Modici Pontis parva columna fui. / Hic artes didici docuique fideliter, inde / Accedit studio lectio sacra meo." In *de Naturis Rerum*, p. 288, he expresses himself amazed at those who reject the claim that 'ex impossible per se quodcumque sequi enuntiabile'. So he was trained in the school of the *Adamitae*. Godfrey of St. Victor in his *Fons Philosophiae* classifies the *Parvipontini* as *Reales* (Iwakuma and Ebbesen, text 18); Jaques of Vitry, in his *Exempla* (Iwakuma and Ebbesen, text 53), tells a story in which the *Adamitae*, are identified with the *Reales*.

18. Alexander Nequam, *Speculum Speculationum*, ed. R. M. Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 123–24; Iwakuma and Ebbesen, text 40b: "Solet autem in logicis queri utrum esse Petrum sit esse quem, et utrum esse Petrum sit esse quid. Quibus datis, infer ergo "Esse quem est esse quid" uel econtrario. Multi sunt et presertim *Nominales*, qui eodem modo prorsus iudicant de suppositione persone create, quo et de suppositione persone diuine. Dicunt ergo quod esse Petrum est esse quem et non esse quid. Vnde et, ad hanc, 'Quis currit?', dicunt respondendum 'Petrus'. Ad hanc autem, 'Quid currit?', dicunt respondendum 'Substantia'. Vt enim aiunt, 'Petrus crescit', non tamen 'Substantia crescit'. Sed nonne crementum quod est in Petro est in substantia? Nonne homo species est huius generis 'substantia'? Nonne esse Petrum est inferius ad esse substantiam?"



Twice in Abaelard's works we find a distinction made between interrogatives formed with '*quid*' and those formed with '*quis*,' or, according to the *Logica 'Ingredientibus*,' '*quae*' or '*quod*'.<sup>19</sup> On both occasions he tells us that '*quid est*' has to do with natures and requires that a name indicating a general or specific status be given in response. The answer, that is, to such questions takes the form '*est X*' where *X* is a genus or species of substance or of one of the accidental categories, the status in question is being *X* (*esse X*). '*Quis*'<sup>20</sup> on the other hand requires a proper name, the name of a person, to be given in response. Unfortunately Abaelard does not expand on these requirements. An explanation of the connection between the form taken by answers to pronomial questions and the thesis that nothing grows can, however, be reconstructed from the discussion of *positio impossibilis* in the *Tractatus Emmeranus*.<sup>21</sup>

### III. IMPOSSIBLE UNIONS AND THE NOMINALIST THEORY OF PREDICATION

Although their names are nowhere mentioned in it, the *Tractatus Emmeranus* is one of the most important texts for the reconstruction of the views of the *Nominales*. More than that, since it is at least in part a manual of instruction and what it instructs us in is an aspect of their logical theory, the later we date it the later we must date the survival of the *Nominales* as an active school with their own logic. I have discussed the *Nominalist* character of the treatise elsewhere.<sup>22</sup> Briefly, it is revealed beyond any doubt in the specification of Abaelard's connexive logic as the appropriate logic for reasoning under impossible hypotheses and in the recognition that it follows from this specification that an appeal to the *locus* "from opposites" is unacceptable there.

As one kind of impossible hypothesis the author of the *Tractatus* allows us to posit unions which are physically but not conceptually impossible. He strikingly supports his claim that we can understand unions such as those which unite in one way or another Socrates the man with Brownie the donkey by appealing to our ability to understand the physically impossible, but supernaturally actualised, hypostatic union.

19. *Logica 'Ingredientibus'* pp. 35–36: "praedicari [in] eo quod quid sit, id est reddi conuenienter ad interrogationem factam per '*quid*', non per '*quis*' uel '*quae*' uel '*quod*', quae magis propria nomina requirunt . . .; *Logica 'Nostrorum Petitioni Sociorum'*, ed. Geyer, p. 537: "Et harum aliae sunt naturales, id est per quas natura petitur demonstrari, ut: quid est homo, aliae personales, ut illae, per quas quaeritur persona distingui a caeteris, ut: quis est in domo? Socrates."

20. And, according to the *Logica 'Ingredientibus'*, '*quae*' and '*quod est*'!

21. Published in (L. M. de Rijk.) "Some Thirteenth Century Tracts on the Game of Obligation," *Vivarium* XII (1974): 94–123.

22. "The Logic of the *Nominales*, or the Rise and Fall of impossible *positio*," *Vivarium* XXX (1992): 123 ff.



No reason is given in the *Tractatus* for hypothesising impossible unions but the general reason for positing the impossible is that by doing so we will be forced to reflect on the logical relations between the items involved. I have argued elsewhere that such “thought experiments” were crucial in the development of accounts of the Trinity.<sup>23</sup> We will see shortly that they also played an important role in Christology at the end of the twelfth century.

The *Tractatus* considers unions of both things and enuntiabilia. The latter were certainly of great interest to the *Nominales*, but here I want only to consider impossible unions of things. The interesting cases are unions of rational beings since for such beings, following Boethius, we may make a distinction between the nature and the person. Socrates is a person since he is an individual substance with a rational nature. His nature is that in virtue of which he is a human being. In the Incarnation the second person of the Trinity in some way came to be human while remaining divine.

The question of the relation of the divine and the human in Christ was the subject of intense debate in the second half of the twelfth century, and until Alexander III’s condemnation of the *Habitus* Theory in 1177 there were three competing accounts. The second of them in Peter Lombard’s ordering,<sup>24</sup> the Subsistence Theory, holds that two distinct natures, one divine and the other human were united in the single person of Jesus Christ. This theory seems to correspond to Abaelard’s views and, though he himself apparently had little to say on the subject, it was attributed to him by John of Cornwall.<sup>25</sup> In the Trinity on the other hand we have three persons united in a single nature. Thus, we have reason to reflect on two kinds of unions of persons and nature. The *Tractatus* does not quite offer the rules for conducting such a study, but rather gives those to be used in exploring the various unions of persons and what it calls ‘essences’ [*essentiae*].

Three kinds of union are available, of persons only, of essences only, and of both persons and essences. To characterise them the *Tractatus* offers a rule for distinguishing the essential from the personal.

Note that essential terms are said to be those which are predicated in the same way of a whole as they are of each of its parts; for example ‘body’, ‘wood’ and the like. Personal terms are said to be those which are predicated of a whole in such a way that they are not predicated of a part of it, as for example the term ‘man’ and the term ‘animal’.<sup>26</sup>

23. In “Impossible Positio as the Foundation of Metaphysics,” in *Semiotics and Logic in Mediaeval Logic Texts*, ed. Costantino Marmo, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997) pp. 255-76.

24. Petrus Lombardus, *Libri IV Sententiarum*, III:6.

25. “The *Eulogium ad Alexandrum Papam tertium*, of John of Cornwall,” ed. N. M. Haring, *Mediaeval Studies* 13 (1951): 253–300, see pp. 263–65. John also tries very unconvincingly to foist the *Habitus* Theory on Abaelard.

26. “The Game of Obligation,” p. 120: “Et notandum quod termini essentielles dicuntur illi qui predicantur ita de toto quod de qualibet eius parte; ut ‘corpus’, ‘lignum’ et similia. Termini personales dicuntur illi qui ita predicantur de toto quod non de qualibet eius parte; ut iste terminus ‘homo’ est et iste terminus ‘animal’.”

The distinction is apparently intended to be that between homogenous and non-homogenous materials and this is confirmed by 'flesh' being given later as another example of an essential term. In order for 'body' to characterise something homogeneous in this way, however, it will be necessary to construe it as mass-noun rather than as a count-noun. That is, each of the corporeal parts of Socrates is, as is Socrates himself, a body but we should not ask how many bodies there are in this room but rather how much body.

Given this distinction we may consider the three types of union, and, in particular, the inferences that will hold in virtue of them. The inclusion of 'body' in the list of essential terms means that any union of two corporeal substances may be a union of their essences only, of their persons only, or of both. Each of these is characterised according to the *Tractatus* by a rule of predication. In an essential union any essential term predicated truly of one of the components as it exists outside the union is predicated essentially of both of them when they are united essentially and likewise for personal terms in a personal union. In particular, the *Tractatus* notes, claims about identity have to be assessed in terms of the kind of union proposed. If Socrates and Plato are united only in a union of essences, then '*Socrates est idem quod Plato*' will have to be conceded but not '*Socrates est Plato*'. The converse holds of a union of their persons alone.

This contrast between predicative expressions of the form '*X est Y*' and those of the form '*X est idem quod Y*' is exactly that made by Abaelard between *predications of property* and *predications of substance* in his discussion of the Trinity.<sup>27</sup> The difference between such predications is, he argues, that in the first, *X* is asserted to have any property expressed by *Y*, and in particular any relational property, whereas in the second, *X* is said to be the thing which has the properties expressed by *Y*. The distinction is absolutely crucial in its application to the Trinity since, because persons involve relational properties, '*X est Y*' is true only if '*X*' and '*Y*' are names for the same person whereas the truth of '*X est idem quod Y*' is guaranteed for any two distinct persons by their having the same essence, the divine nature. In explaining the distinction between these two kinds of predications Abaelard draws an analogy with the distinction between the wax of a waxen image, and the waxen image itself, between the matter and the enmattered. In this case because of the relational character of the terms 'matter' and 'enmattered' both possible predications of property are false while the corresponding predications of substance are true.

While the *Tractatus* does not deal with interrogation directly, it does note that under such impossible hypotheses by union, inferences from claims formulated using neuter adjectives to those using masculine or feminine adjectives are unacceptable. The reason for this we are told is that:

Masculine and feminine are imposed from the form of the thing and for this reason are called formal terms, and so personal; the neuter

27. *Theologia Christiana*, IV:86–92.

gender is not imposed from any form which is in the thing but rather from pure privation. And so the thing is understood without form, and so the term is essential.<sup>28</sup>

The talk here of pure privation and the contrast with form as the justification for calling terms essential recalls the contrast repeatedly insisted on by Abaelard between the differentiating forms and the material essence of a thing. If that is the distinction that is intended then the pronoun '*quid*' would, as Abaelard proposed, pick out a substance in its generic or substantial status. The talk of pure privation here is modified a little later by the observation that fleshness and corporeity are forms of essences alone. Essence for the *Tractatus* thus is not "bare" matter but rather the uniform stuffs which Aristotle called homœmeries.

What has perhaps happened is that Abaelard's material essence has been understood as homogenous matter—through not as a prime matter—and as that which is picked out as such by neuter pronouns and adjectives. Non-homogeneous things on the other hand are so in virtue of forms determining structure and function and are picked out as such with 'personal' adjectives and pronouns with masculine and feminine endings.

In the *Dialectica* Abaelard argued that integral wholes cannot grow. In the *Logica 'Ingredientibus'* he showed how we can legitimate our talk of growth by characterising substances as items whose conditions of individuation demand less than the identity of their integral parts. If, however, we choose to characterise a substance simply as an integral whole, then we will have to agree that as such it does not grow. The author of the *Tractatus* seems to suppose that substances may be characterised in this way by means of what he refers to as essential terms. Thus he remarks about growth.

There are certain forms which apply to a person only, such as growth (*crementum*) and decrease. Whence if Socrates grows and Brownie decreases in size, and there is a union only of essence between Socrates and Brownie, one must concede 'Socrates grows' and deny 'Brownie grows'.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, the *Tractatus* goes on to note that '*aliquid*' is a term predicated of essence alone, which is as it should be since it is a neuter

28. "The Game of Obligation," p. 121. "Sed potest queri quare adiectivum sumptum in neutro genere potius sit essentialis terminus quam adiectivum sumptum in masculino vel feminino genere. Ad hoc est respondendum quod masculinum et femininum inponuntur a forma rei et propter hoc dicunt <ur> termini formales, et ita personales; neutrum genus non inponitur ab aliqua forma que sit in re, immo a pura privatione. Et ita intelligitur res sine forma, et ita terminus essentialis."

29. "The Game of Obligation," p. 121: "Notandum quod sunt quedam forme que conveniunt persone tantum, sicut crementum et decrementum. Unde si Sortes crescat et Brunellus decrescat et fiat union essentie tantum inter Sortem et Brunellum, hec est concedenda: 'Sor crescit'; hec autem neganda: 'Brunellus crescit'."

pronoun. This being so, providing that the *Tractatus* will allow that the propositions are well-formed, we can prove the thesis that nothing grows by appealing directly to philosophical grammar: Since 'to grow' is a term predicated of persons alone, it cannot be predicated of the indefinite neuter pronoun '*aliquid*.' But then '*aliquid crescit*' is necessarily false and so '*nihil crescit*' must be true.

The thesis that nothing grows is thus connected for the *Nominales* with the claim about pronouns as part of theory of relations of persons and essences. It seems from the reports that have survived that this theory was applied by the *Nominales* to the question of the nature of the hypostatic union and it is to that which I now turn.

#### IV. PHILOSOPHICAL GRAMMAR AND THE THEORY OF THE INCARNATION

Pope Alexander III condemned the *Habitus* Theory of the Incarnation because it did not allow sufficient reality to the humanity of Christ. Both of the other two theories, the *Assumptus* Theory and the Subsistence Theory offered accounts which had the Word united with a real man. Insisting, however, that the human component in the Incarnation be genuinely human immediately generated another problem: Why does the combination of body and soul in Christ not produce, just as it does in Socrates, a distinct human person? The *Habitus* Theory had to be rejected because according to it '*Christus secundum hominem non est aliquid*,' but if in virtue of his human nature Christ was *aliquid*, doesn't it follow, as it does for Socrates, that he was *aliquis* and *aliquis* distinct from the second person of the Trinity.

Our collection of testimonia contains three sets of references to the views of the *Nominales* on the Incarnation. They are found in works by Peter the Chanter, Alexander Neckham, and Godfrey of Poitiers dating from the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century. From them it is clear that the *Nominales* upheld a version of the Subsistence Theory and that they solved the '*est aliquid*' puzzle by appealing to their general account of the application of pronouns.

According to the Subsistence Theory, in the Incarnation a human body and soul were united to the second person of the Trinity and to one another. Peter the Chanter tells that in addressing the question of how many distinct items were involved in these unions—that is, how many natures and how many persons—some people appealed to a distinction that the *Nominales* made for rational substances in general:

some say that since the assumed man is the person, that is the incarnate Word, the Word and the assumed man are in no way to be counted separately. Nevertheless one can say something about the man in such a way that one is not saying something about the Word. The situation

here is just as it is in the secular sciences according to the *Nominales* . . . For they distinguish between essence and person. Socrates and the substance which he is cannot be counted separately, but nevertheless I am able to talk about the essence without speaking about Socrates.<sup>30</sup>

In the passage I quoted earlier, Alexander Neckham records that the *Nominales* treated the divine and created persons in the same way and so it is reasonable to suppose that Peter is here reporting their views on divine as well as secular matters. As a grammatical and logical corollary of the distinction between essence and person insisted on by Abaelard and the *Nominales* they could, thus, avoid the threat of multiplicity posed by the conditional '*si Christus est homo qui non est Pater, Christus est aliquid quod non est Pater*' by simply rejecting, as Godfrey notes, the inference from '*homo*' to '*aliquid*.'<sup>31</sup>

Directly contradicting the *Nominales*, Alexander Neckam, one of the *Parvipontani*, and so a *Realis*, maintains that while it is true that a divine person is a *quis* but not a *quid*, where they claim that '*esse Petrum est esse quem et non esse quid*,' it is true rather that '*esse Petrum non est esse quem sed est esse quid*.' Alexander formulates his discussion in terms of the supposition and the use of pronouns but warns us that the distinction between personal supposition for a person and essential supposition for an essence must be distinguished as theological from the logical use of the expression 'personal supposition' in contrast to 'simple supposition.' Could we have here a terminological distinction which may help us to trace the *Nominales* further?<sup>32</sup>

The latest record of the *Nominales* to make a connection between their views on pronouns and the thesis that nothing grows also introduces us to

30. Iwakuma and Ebbesen, text 33a. "Nota quod quidam eorum dicunt quod cum homo ille assumptus sit persona, Verbum scilicet incarnatum, nullo modo connumerabilia sunt Verbum et ille homo assumptus. Potest tamen fieri sermo de homine illo ita quod non de Verbo, sicut in secularibus litteris secundum Nominales qui dicunt quod substantia que est Socrates desinit esse, non tamen Socrates desinit esse. Distingunt enim inter essentiam et personam. Nulla connumeratio est inter Socratem et substantiam que ipse est, tamen possum loqui de illa essentia, licet non loquar de Socrate."

31. The point, I take it, is to avoid arguments like that used by William of Auxerre: "'Christ is God and man,' William says, 'and to be God is to be something [*quid*]; likewise, to be man is to be something [*quid*]. Therefore Christ is something and something. Therefore he is one and another. Therefore Christ is two'," (*De Incarnatione* 3, 1), quoted in W. Principe, *William of Auxerre's Theology of the Hypostatic Union*, (Toronto: P.I.M.S. 1963), p. 93.

32. *Speculum Speculationum*, Lib. II, p. 125: "Licet autem in sacra Scriptura utamur hac diuisione suppositionum, 'Alia est personalis, alia essentialis', in logicis tamen non habet locum hec diuisio secundum multorum assertionem. Notum est autem etiam uulgo que sit personalis suppositio, secundum quod distinguitur a simplici suppositione. Personalis enim suppositio dicitur, cum de re manerie agit. Simplex est suppositio, cum pro manerie redditur uera locutio. Vnde et hoc relatiuum 'qui' uel 'que' quandoque dicitur facere personalem relationem, quandoque simplicem; personalem ut cum dicitur 'Mulier que fuit Eua causa fuit nostre dampnationis', simplicem ut cum dicitur 'Mulier que dampnauit, saluauit'."

a very striking impossible *positio*. Godfrey of Poitiers asks us to consider the impossible hypothesis that the body and soul of Christ continue to exist and to be united with one another after the union of each of them with the second person of the Trinity has been dissolved.<sup>33</sup> The question that then has to be answered is whether the man who exists after the dissolution is the same man who existed before it. Godfrey denies this, claiming, indeed, that the composite of body and soul that exists after the union never existed before. In the texts in which he reports their views Godfrey, like Peter of Capua on occasion, adopts the rather unfortunate device of speaking at one time with the voice of a *Realis* and at another with that of a *Nominalis*, and so all that is clear in this particular case is that his own view disagrees with that of the *Nominales*. Their response, he tells us, is to concede that the composite that exists after the dissolution of the hypostatic union existed before the dissolution but to deny that the man who exists after the dissolution existed before.<sup>34</sup> Again they base their reply on the principle that it is 'one thing to demonstrate a person, quite another to demonstrate an essence,' thus making just the distinction that enables them to concede 'this man grew' while denying 'this substance grew.'

## CONCLUSION

The *Nominales'* thesis that nothing grows is thus explained as a consequence of a distinction that they insist on between substance and essence, the same

33. We are not told why the hypothesis is impossible but the Definition of Chalcedon requires us to acknowledge "unum eundemque Christum Filium Dominum unigenitum in duabus naturis inconfuse, immutabiliter, indivise, *inseparabiliter*, agnoscendum, nusquam sublata differentia naturarum propter unionem" (*Enchiridion Symbolorum* \*302, ed. Denzinger, [Herder, Freiburg, 1965]).

34. I have to emend the text here. Iwakuma and Ebbesen, text 48d has: "Nominalis, qui dicit quod aliud est demonstrare personam et aliud essentiam, posset ad hanc impossibilem positionem de facili respondere. Potest enim concedere istas 'hoc compositum fuit' demonstrato coniuncto ex corpore et anima; et generaliter concederet sumptis terminis essentialibus et negaret sumptis personalibus, sicuti concedit '*iste homo heri fuit*', non tamen concedit '*haec substantia heri fuit*'; similiter '*iste homo crevit*', non tamen '*haec substantia crevit*'. Et sicut hanc distinctionem multiplicem '*haec substantia animata sensibilis crevit*' ita et hanc '*haec substantia individua rationalis naturae fuit*', quia haec dictio '*haec*' potest adiungi huic termino '*substantia*' tantum, et sic demonstratur essentia et alii termini veniunt appositivae et est sensus '*haec substantia quae est individua rationalis naturae fuit*', et sic vera, et non sequitur 'ergo iste homo' ab essentiali ad personalem; vel hoc signum '*haec*' potest demonstrare totalem definitionem '*substantia etc*', et cum definitio sit personalis sicut et definitum, non demonstratur ibi nisi persona, et ideo falsa. Similiter haec vera '*hoc compositum fuit*', non tamen '*iste homo fuit*'."

I have to read the *Nominales* as conceding the claim about substance and denying the one about man but I am not shy of doing this since (1) that is what they should do; and (2) that is what the explanation that follows has them doing.

distinction that manifests itself in their claims about the difference between the neuter and the masculine and feminine forms of adjectives and pronouns. I have argued elsewhere that the *Nominales* may well have been responsible for the invention of impossible *positio*. Whether or not they were, the case of the *positio* just discussed<sup>35</sup> suggests that even without looking for the use of Abaelardian connexive logic we may still hope to trace the *Nominales* and their influence in a characteristic strategy for dealing with such hypotheses. There is thus some hope that even if we find no more testimonies to them we may still be able to track the traces of the followers of Peter Abaelard in regions into which he himself never ventured.

35. The *positio* was being used in the 1170s. See the "Quaestio Anonymi De Homine Assumpto," ed. Lauge Nielsen, *CIMAGL* 66 (1996): 228. It is very well developed in William of Auxerre's *Summa Aurea*, III:1.3.7, ed. Ribailier, iii:1, pp. 29–34.



